

CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF
POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

No. 485.—VOL. X.

SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 1893.

PRICE 1½d.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT READING.

It was a saying of Hobbes's, that if he had read as much as other men, he would doubtless have shared their ignorance. An utterance so bold could only afford to be made by a man endowed with great capacities for independent thought, and possessed of the grand arrogance of genius. Most of us, unless we have fallen into the lamentable error of believing that we are geniuses ourselves, have to be content with thinking over again the thoughts of other and greater minds than our own. Happily, the existing tendency towards shorter hours of labour and the cheapening of books affords more opportunity and increased facilities for reading. As to what it is we should read, much must be left to age and taste and habits of thought.

It may seem superfluous to say here that one cannot put old heads on young shoulders; yet it is a truth of which many parents require to be reminded, who are very anxious for their boys to 'get on,' and who deplore with uplifted eyes their offspring's fondness of 'adventure books.' That is the tendency in the average boy. Occasionally, the precocity of genius asserts itself in a Goethe, a Shelley, or a Byron; but, speaking generally, childhood is mentally prone to follow after the new and the wonderful. It is a principle the operation of which should not be interfered with as long as a boy's excursions into the realm of fiction are kept within reasonable bounds.

The real dawn of literary taste is to be found in our nursery classics, the fairy tales of our childhood. No matter how old, how worldly-wise we become, the potent spell of those legends never loses its sweet sway over our minds. They are often mercilessly mangled almost beyond recognition by the modern pantomime manager, their plot obscured by a bewildering splendour, and the simplicity of the favourite themes lost in a maze of magnificence; but however much adapted and mutilated and expurgated, childhood has still a literature of its own. We

remember that its scope was very limited, and that, far from familiarity breeding contempt, it wouldn't have been half the fun if we didn't know what was coming. How we used to listen times without number to the same old stories, laugh at the same old jokes, and cry at the same old points. How we used to sympathise with ill-used Little Claus, and jeer at the discomfiture of bullying Big Claus. Then came *Robinson Crusoe* and the *Swiss Family Robinson*; after which we revelled in Indian frontier warfare, and dreamed of Headless Horsemen and Mohicans that should have been extinct, but lived to disturb our sleep. Anon we devoured *Jack Sheppard* and *Tom Cringle's Log*, made friends with Marryat and Kingston, and lived for a time in an atmosphere of sea-fights, dare-devil midshipmen, pirates who had never heard of scruples, and bloodthirsty buccaneers. Then was the time that no man could come fully up to our ideal of a hero who had not captured with a single frigate half-a-dozen feluccas crammed between decks with slaves, or scoured the seas as the captain of a bold privateer with a roving commission, unless he had led a cutting-out expedition or run the blockade at mid-day. The next age shifts into the gorgeous imaginings of the *Arabian Nights*, which fixed on the retina of our memory images of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, who helped the benevolent Genius to bring old Scrooge back to sympathy and friends. But as we grew older the wants of our nature widened, and we found to our anxiety that we were growing out of our books just as we had grown out of our clothes.

It is the period immediately following that marks a most important epoch in intellectual life, for then it is that its future is to a great extent moulded. Habits are contracted and characters formed early in life, and it is probable that the colour of a person's reading is mainly determined during the time of hobbledom, when he is in process of passing from the limp and lanky school-boy to the set and rigid man. Just at this time is a most critical period in his career, for now it is that

he obtains a new outlook into life. Previously, he has been concerned with the miniature world of school, and looked at the greater world only with the eyes of a school-boy. But now, entering a business or a profession, he enters into a larger life, and begins to look about him with an air of deeper inquiry. And the more he reads of contemporary literature the worse does he become, for the air is thick with controversy; nothing is too sacred to be contradicted, and the spirit of 'sweet reasonableness' seems to be dead.

The difficulty of finding something to read in an age when half the world is engaged in writing books for the other half to read is not one of quantity but of quality, so that the question, 'What shall I read?' inevitably suggests the parallel query, 'What shall I not read?' The wisdom of writing, according to Mr Lowell, consists in knowing what to leave in the inkpot. Applying the same truth to reading, it may be said that he who reads most wisely is the reader who knows what books to leave uncut. If the number of books extant in the time of Solomon was so great as to call for comment, Carlyle has far more reason to bewail the prolific press of to-day: 'Still, undaunted, rushes on the great array of Publications, unpausing, to their final home; and still Oblivion, like the grave, cries "Give."'

The awful power of the omnipotent daily paper as an engine for good or evil can hardly be over-estimated. Nine men out of ten, though they will not admit it, have an almost superstitious veneration for anything in print. The City man, at lunch with a friend, delivers himself, not of his own opinions, but of those of the daily paper which he has swallowed with his breakfast, so that the political argument is not Jones *v.* Brown, but the leader-writer of the 'Daily Slasher' *v.* him of the 'Morning Scribbler.' In a very busy age, it is doubtless a great saving of time and trouble to buy an opinion ready-made for a penny; but the habit is fatal to the faculty of pronouncing an independent judgment. As a matter of fact, however, since the establishment of free libraries, there has been a manifest improvement in the class of books read. Librarians tell us that history is more in demand, and that the best books are gradually superseding in the estimation of the people those which might be considered of a less favourable tendency. This is good news; but there is still much room for improvement, and only in proportion as we realise our individual responsibility in this matter, and act up to it, shall we be able to help to raise the tone of the public taste; for it is certain that degrading and vicious literature is supplied in answer to a demand, although it is probably just as sadly certain that writers and purveyors, finding that such a demand exists, do not hesitate to lead the way where formerly they cautiously felt it.

In choice of reading there are two cardinal principles which should ever be borne in mind—first, that it is necessary to keep fairly abreast of the principal thought and news of the time; and second, that it is essential, in order to a right estimate of present events, to cull at any rate some of the choicest flowers of the literature and history of the past. To keep fairly apace with

general thought and news, newspapers and magazines are indispensable, though too much attention cannot be paid to Emerson's advice in this regard—to learn the art of quickly and profitably assimilating their contents. To be for ever wrapped up in a newspaper, and to depend entirely on it for mental sustenance, is truly a humiliating position for people 'heirs of all the ages, foremost in the ranks of time;' but it is a common one, for there are thousands who, never reading anything else, are content to let their intellects starve in the midst of plenty. It is indeed this very plenty which is so embarrassing. The majority of people who read at all, read too much and think too little, falling into the error to which Schopenhauer alludes when he says that the safest way of having no thoughts of our own is to take up a book every moment we have nothing to do.

The second principle that has been indicated—that it is necessary to obtain a well-proportioned view of present events—involves the reading of history, biography, philosophy, and fiction. It is a striking comment on the prevalence of popular ignorance that a sensational murder will provide a month's topic for conversation, while the publication of a profound work which is the result of long years of toil will pass unheeded. A people educated by reading that which would give them a just sense of proportion could not fail to discriminate between the relative importance of the two events. For this purpose English literature is admirably adapted, Lord Macaulay averring that there is in the English classics a body of teaching power which the literatures of Greece and Rome cannot rival. 'No people has on the whole written so much and so well,' says the Rev. Stopford Brooke; 'no people can point to so long and so splendid a train of poets and prose writers.' It is no part of our intention to presume to mention 'the best hundred books,' nor to disparage unduly the works of modern authors; but when there is so much that is standard in our language, so much that has stood the tests of time and trial, it is impossible not to sympathise with that bookseller, justly proud of his conservative tendencies in the matter of literature, who replied, on being asked for a copy of a modern theological novel, 'I sell nothing which time has not mellowed.'

But, though nobody has a right to prescribe the books for another to read, a direction may be indicated which experience has proved it is desirable to take. That direction may be briefly pointed out as the one which contains the gems of our language. There are many of them—quite enough to occupy the time which the average man is able to devote to reading. When he has read these he will have a right to explore the bypaths of literature; but only when he has exhausted the first class should he begin to dabble in the second, third, or tenth rate. In fact, once this taste for the best is cultivated, any other than it will pall upon the ear and fail to satisfy the mind. The reader becomes intuitively aware when a master spirit is talking to him, for he feels that what he is reading bears an intimate relation to universal humanity as well as to himself, and therefore possesses a vital interest for all. This is the true test of whether a book is merely parochial or belongs to the wide

republic of letters. No matter how exalted or how humble the theme, if it appeals to our common humanity it is literature in the true sense. The *Compleat Angler*, with its freshness and simplicity and overflowing love of Nature, and the *Natural History of Selborne*, wherein, says Carlyle, 'Parson White has copied a little sentence or two faithfully from the Inspired Volume of Nature,' are as truly literature as the sublimities of Milton's cathedral diapason.

THE BURDEN OF ISABEL.*

CHAPTER XVII.—THE HISTORY OF A GREAT SUSPICION.

To Isabel the early days of her father's sojourn with her were days of comparative rest and peace. A subdued zephyr of excitement, indeed, breathed through them, but they were devoid of anxiety and incident. Her father had been brought by Mr Doughty, as she had arranged, and he had settled down with her readily and cheerfully. The first thing he had done on entering her sitting-room had been to run his eye over her book-shelves, and the next had been to sit down in her easy-chair with a book that was new to him; and thus he had continued. She had found a lodging for the faithful Doughty a door or two off, and he hung about the chief—in attendance or on guard—while she was absent at school. The first two days being Saturday and Sunday, she was able to be present herself pretty constantly. On Sunday evening she went to Rutland Gate—it had been arranged that she should dine there on Sundays, and she feared that if she intermitted the habit, awkward questions might be asked—but she went with an even mind; for she left Mr Ainsworth in conversation with her father, on the understanding that he would stay till her return. It was not, then, till Monday that her father had occasion to note her absence during the greater part of the day. On her return from school she found him disturbed.

'My dear child,' said he, before she had well entered, 'I cannot permit this! Alexander has told me that you go out teaching in a school every day: you mustn't do it any more, my dear!—You understand, my dear,' said he, taking her hands and looking tenderly on her, 'that your father is going to provide for you: it is but right and proper that he should: it is a duty and a pleasure he has neglected too long.'

'You are very good, father,' said she; and for the moment she was as grateful as if his desire had been carried into act; 'but I cannot give my teaching up at a moment's notice. I must go on for another term. You understand—don't you?'

He understood, and he assented; and thus she temporised.

But from that hour he began to be full of schemes of work. He discussed them with his daughter, he discussed them with Alexander, and he discussed them with Alan Ainsworth—discussed them with such eloquence, subtlety, and completeness, that it seemed as if he must sit

down at once in the heat of his subjects—but he always put off the writing till 'to-morrow.'

'There now,' said Ainsworth one evening, when he was wrought to as great a pitch of interest as the expositor himself—'there you have material for at least three first-rate articles! Set to and write them, and I pledge myself to find a place for them. Make a start to-night.'

'Let us talk the subject out a little more thoroughly first,' said Mr Raynor: 'I'll make a good beginning early in the morning when I'm alone.'

Thus the days slipped away; but Isabel, at least, was not disappointed, for she had built no hopes on her father's promises of performance. Her father's intentions were always of the best and noblest, and it was but a vice of the body—she told herself—become an iron habit that he could not give them effect. He was, of course, too clever a man not to be aware of his own weaknesses, and he had still too much conscience not to be bitten sometimes with a rage against himself. His rage was commonly impotent, but it was honestly felt. But in saying that much I am anticipating somewhat; for all the evidence he gave of self-contumely in those early days, when he was still fresh to the change in his surroundings, was in a certain conversation with his daughter.

'I am,' said he suddenly, 'a worthless wretch, my dear! I have no will. Or, at least, I should say I have a will, but have lost the force to make it work. I do not mean to accuse myself of absolute idleness—no, no; that would not be fair to myself; and I have reasons enough for self-reproach without adding imaginary ones—but in all things that concern my moral feelings I have sunk into a strange apathy and cowardice. During all the years I have neglected you, my child, I have been filled with shame of myself; God knows not a day has passed but the thought of you has gnawed at my heart—and yet somehow I could do nothing! It seems amazing and preposterous, but there it is!'

'You are morbid, father dear,' said she. 'You are not strong; but you will get stronger. Wait, and your will-power will come back.'

All these things Isabel laid up and pondered in her heart, with the result that she pitied him with the ungrudging, infinite pity of a strong woman, and was resolved more than ever to protect him with all the resources of her love. It was well for him that she was thus powerfully drawn to him early, for the bond that bound them was soon to be sorely tried. The trial came about in this wise.

Uncle Harry had been more disappointed than he could have imagined by Isabel's refusal to live with him. He admitted to himself that she had been quite sweet and reasonable about it, and that he really had no grievance; but yet he had been so long used to command and to be obeyed, to say to this man 'Come,' and to that 'Go,' and to find action follow in unhesitating consequence, that it chafed him to find the inclination and purpose of another running counter to his plans. So he brooded on her refusal, and turned over and over her reasons for it. Moreover, his many years' intercourse with wily Asiatics had made him very suspicious, and somewhat prone to put two and two together to make five. Isabel

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had made two or three singular admissions: she would have accepted his offer if it had been made a week—or even three days—before; she had in that time taken upon herself, or incurred, some responsibility of which she could not speak, and which, therefore, must be open to objection—and she clearly knew some one who—in plain words—was given to drink. What wonder is it that these strange confessions should coalesce in Uncle Harry's mind, accustomed to examine and deduce, into one coherent statement? Isabel had become entangled closely with some dissipated ne'er-do-well, whom, in her generosity, she was about to marry to save him from his vice! That is too common an event with women not to have seemed plausible even in the case of Isabel. Having got thus far, Uncle Harry became alarmed, and could not forbear to communicate his fears to Mr Suffield.

'It's rank nonsense, Harry!' said Suffield. 'As I've told you before, you've lived among those black fellows so long that you're as suspicious as a Justice o' the Peace!'

'It may be rank, George,' said Uncle Harry; 'but it's not nonsense. Look at the way the girl has lived the last few years!—having the complete control of her own movements, and making what acquaintances she liked! Do you know what friends and acquaintances she may have made? No, of course you don't.'

'I've never heard her speak of any, and she has always been a frank, open girl, Harry. The only young man she knows and cares about, besides George, so far as I'm aware, is Alan Ainsworth—and, of course, he's out of this question.'

'When did he tell you,' asked Uncle Harry, 'that he had come up to London?—come up earlier than he had intended? A day or two before my talk with Isabel—wasn't it? Her "three days" would just cover that! That's a curious thing.'

'Bless my soul!' exclaimed Mr Suffield. 'You actually imagine that Alan can be the man? But you don't know him! Harry, you're no better than a Grand Inquisitor!'

'I'm only inquisitorial,' said Uncle Harry, slightly huffed, 'in the interest of my niece and yours; and it might have been better if you had been more inquisitorial long ago.' And he marched into the garden, where his tent was permanently pitched.

The excellent Suffield sat confused. If these things could be, he would have to rearrange all his preconceptions of both men and women. He wondered, and then he began to doubt; and when an honest creature like him once begins to doubt, he doubts in a thorough, straightforward way characteristic only of himself, and by no means to be reckoned with. He turned immediately and wrote to Ainsworth that he would like to see him as soon as possible on an important matter. Ainsworth, of course, came on the summons, but yet Suffield had had time to go over his doubts, over and over again, till he had trodden them down almost as hard and fixed as beliefs. He received his young friend privately in the Library.

'I call this my snuggery,' said he, in a kind of parenthetical apology; 'though there's nothing very snug about it—is there? I smoke a pipe

here sometimes; but I don't seem to mix well wi' the wiggid old chaps on the wall there'—indicating certain severe portraits of past politicians and statesmen of the house of Padiham.—'They don't know me, and they appear to think I'm taking a deuce of a liberty in trying to make myself comfortable in their company, though the Lord knows I pay enough for it. Yes; I smoke a pipe, and make my head swell wi' solid information out of Blue-books; but I'd rather be sitting by my own fireside wi' a long clay, having a good talk, as we used to do.—But sit you down, Alan, my lad, and never mind the old chaps. By the way, my niece, Isabel, and you seemed to hit it off pretty well last time I saw you together. Have you seen anything of her, by chance, since you have come up to London?'

'Yes,' answered Ainsworth, somewhat embarrassed; 'I happened to meet her in the street.' He thought that in saying so much he was admitting as much as was fair to Isabel.

'Well,' said Suffield, after having mentally noted the admission. 'And how are things going with you? Very busy, eh?'

He moved uneasily about the room while he spoke, and kept his eyes off Ainsworth.

'Yes, Mr Suffield,' answered the young man, 'I'm fairly busy; and things are going on as well as can be expected, as the doctors say.'

'You find no difficulty about settling down in London, I suppose? If you find any difficulty, come to me, you know—come to me. I'll be always glad to do whatever I can for you, as I've told you.'

'You're very good, Mr Suffield,' said Ainsworth; 'and I assure you, if I were in any difficulty, or if ever I may be in a difficulty, there is no one to whom I would more unreservedly come than you.'

'I'm glad to hear you say that, my lad,' said Suffield, and considered his young friend's countenance a moment to observe signs of a rising confession. But he saw none. 'You see, my lad,' he continued, 'London's a place that makes a young fellow live always on the strain, like a man balancing himself on a tight-rope, or like a man I saw once on the Spa at Scarborough that walked on a globe and worked himself and his globe up and up on a narrow gangway twisting round and round to the top of a high pole. A young man like you that has to put his head into his work gets excited, gets over-excited, maybe, wi' working overtime, till human nature won't stand it—unless the man's a horse—and says "No, no! Let me rest a bit." But the young man won't let his nature rest; he whips it up, and jogs it on wi' stimulants. And then he comes a cropper, and is done for.' Again he considered his young friend, but still he saw no signs of compunction, or even of self-consciousness. 'I once knew,' he continued, 'a clever lad like yourself—a dear friend he was, and a kind of relation, which you are not, not yet.' Upon that Ainsworth blushed, and Suffield thought: Aha! there's something here! 'He was in the same line of work as you are in,' said Suffield. 'He was a very promising lad, and was getting on quite swimmingly, when suddenly he went under.'

'Dead?' asked Ainsworth, interested.

'No, my lad. Shipwrecked!—Lost—lost! It

came suddenly to us, but not to him! He knew for a long time, though we didn't, that he was ruining himself and his family wth his stimulant.—not drink, but something quite as fatal to him!

'What? Not opium?'

'Yes, my lad. Opium it was.'

FLAX-CULTURE IN SCOTLAND.

Is following out the treatment of this subject, the writer will avoid all theories that have not been tested by facts and experience, and will endeavour to explain the most approved method of flax-culture as briefly as is consistent with an intelligent understanding of the process.

The flax-plant, of which there are many varieties, is cultivated in nearly every country in the world; but the common species with which we are acquainted, and which is raised specially for the fibre, is indigenous to Europe, Egypt, and part of Asia.

Our principal supply of the raw material is imported from Russia, where the plant has long been, and still is, cultivated more extensively than in any other country in the world; but there the culture of the crop and preparation of the fibre receive less care and attention than in any other flax-producing country. This neglect may be accounted for by the immense tracts under crop, and also by much thinner sowing than is practised in other countries, in order to give the plant greater strength and more numerous branches, to prevent its being laid during the violent thunder-storms that prevail about the time it is in flower. The result of this treatment, however, is a coarse fibre, and also a very much inferior yield to that grown thicker, and under more favourable circumstances of soil and attention in its early stages.

Germany, Austria, and France follow Russia as flax-producing countries, and in each of these an average area of over two hundred thousand acres is kept under this crop. In Holland, flax is grown principally for the seed, and the planting and growth of the crop, as well as the time of pulling, is regulated for this purpose. By properly maturing the seed, the quality of the fibre is injured, and renders the subsequent process more difficult; but the Dutch farmers are amply remunerated by the high price obtained for the seed, which has for agricultural purposes a world-wide fame, and is chiefly sown in Britain, although Riga seed is also used, and preferred by some growers as being more hardy.

It is Belgium, however, to which we must turn to see flax in the highest state of cultivation, where nothing is neglected that can in any measure improve the quantity, and more especially the quality, of the crop. Here proper rotation of crops, superior tillage, and liberal manuring of the land, are attended to in a manner not seen elsewhere, and to this the careful, plodding Belgian farmers owe their success in raising other crops as well as flax, and which has earned for them the reputation they enjoy of being the most successful agriculturists in the world.

In Flanders especially, the crop under our notice receives the most careful attention. The

fields resemble well-kept gardens, and here the very finest flax is produced, such as is employed in the manufacture of the famous Brussels lace. It brings in the market one hundred to one hundred and fifty pounds, and often as high as two hundred pounds, per ton; indeed, sometimes exceeding in value the land on which it was produced, and so exceedingly fine that a Belgian pound of the raw material has been spun into a thread four thousand miles long.

Flax-growing has spread more in Ireland than in any other part of the country, notwithstanding that the soil of England and Scotland is almost, if not altogether as suitable for its cultivation. This can only be accounted for by the numerous small holdings, and the perseverance of the farmers with the crop, which has caused scutching-mills to spring up to deal with the straw and prepare the fibre for the market. About eighty thousand acres of flax were grown in Ireland last year, producing a fair yield; but the quantity of fibre obtained from this acreage is not sufficient for one-fourth of the Belfast manufacturers alone.

We have already referred to the very primitive mode of culture in Russia, and the consequent poor return. The inference plainly is, that the more intelligent Scotch farmer, with richer land and better appliances, would rear superior crops both in quantity and quality. In proof of this, Irish flax brings in the market nearly double that of Russian; and a quantity of dressed flax grown recently in Fifeshire brought ninety pounds per ton.

In addition to these more favourable conditions attending the realisation of the crop at the present time, a new industry has arisen within the last few years which utilises the fibre *in* the straw. It may not be generally known that a company now exists in Dundee which will purchase the crop from the farmer as it comes from the field, delivered at the nearest railway station. This method of disposal gives a much quicker return, if not so large results as from preparing the fibre for the spinner, and certainly removes the objection raised by some who would grow flax but are uncertain of a market, and afraid of the difficulties attending the retting process. Until a few years ago not a single field of this crop had been reared in Fifeshire for a generation, when Messrs John Fergus & Co., of Leslie, and some Dundee spinners, turned their attention to the subject; and through their enterprise in supplying seed, and also in renting land for the purpose, they have succeeded in inducing farmers throughout the country to plant in small patches during the years 1887-88 an aggregate of about one hundred acres.

With the farmer, of course the main consideration in making a departure from the usual rotation, and introducing a crop that entails more labour than those to which they have been so long accustomed, is the vital question, How will it pay? Now, this query can be put in fewer words than its answer; as not many farmers keep separate accounts of each crop they cultivate, and among the many Irish growers, scarcely a third plant over two acres, and even those have very little to show in the way of book-keeping. The profits of flax-growing vary considerably, more so, perhaps, than any other crop; climatic influ-

ences, exposure, value of land, price of labour, and other factors enter in and disturb any calculation, however carefully made. We are, however, in possession of some facts which will help us to a certain extent in answering the question, and although the returns for the different years show a wide variation, still something like an average may be arrived at. From the causes above mentioned, wide fluctuations must be looked for, so that even a fairly struck average may be to some extent misleading, as adverse circumstances have a tendency in some years to become cumulative. The correct way, therefore, of presenting the matter is to give a few examples showing the experience of others, and allow growers to draw their own conclusions.

The average cost of producing an acre of flax in Ireland is between eight and nine pounds, including the expenses of retting and scutching; but there, it must be remembered, the cost of labour is less than with us, and further, there the small farmer and his family frequently work their own land, and employ few if any assistants. The return of an English farmer gives the total expenses connected with growing an acre of flax as eight pounds, which realised him as taken off the field the sum of twelve pounds. Something like this return was experienced by most of the growers in Fifeshire.

An experiment was made in Aberdeenshire on two acres of very stiff clay land with an easterly exposure. This test as to the profitable nature of the crop was considered a most severe one, the season being so unfavourable, and the land of the very poorest description. The total cost of production, including rent and twenty loads of manure, was £12, 13s., and the crop was sold green at the nearest railway station—that of Udney—to a Dundee merchant for £20, leaving the very fair profit of £3, 13s. 6d. per acre.

In 1886, '87, and '88, experiments were made by a well-known firm of bleachers near Perth, with the result of an average return for the three years of over £6 per acre. This result, we think, needs no comment, further than to say if it is not sufficient to induce farmers to give the crop a fair trial by sowing a few acres, then the agricultural depression of which we hear so much cannot be so severe as is generally supposed.

We are satisfied that even a higher return would have been got had the fibre been prepared for the spinner, being supported in this view by some returns from Ireland, showing a gross income of from thirty to forty pounds per acre. Our object, however, is to prove that the processes of retting and scutching, with their attending difficulties, may be dispensed with, and a very fair return obtained by disposal of the crop in the manner above indicated.

There is scarcely another plant which acclimatises itself so readily under different conditions and in so many countries as flax. Speaking generally, it will thrive in the greatest variety of soils, but, like most other plants, 'The better the land the better the crop.' Any land not too sandy, or peaty, or of a cold, stiff, clay nature, will suit flax; but the best yield will be obtained from a good deep loamy soil.

Much of the success of a flax crop depends on the selection of seed, and growers cannot be too careful in this respect. To ensure a good result,

the very best seed procurable must be got irrespective of price. With beginners, seed-buying must in a great measure be a matter of good faith. Seedsmen only should be dealt with whose word and recommendation can be depended upon. Although a knowledge of quality can only be gained by experience, the germinating power can be tested before sowing by planting one hundred seeds in a pot and watching results.

Dutch or Russian seed, or, better still, a strain through both countries, is the most suitable of imported kinds. Some of the best crops, however, have been raised from home-grown seed, which, we think, should be more used than it is for this purpose, being certainly better adapted than that grown in foreign countries under so different conditions of soil and climate; besides, the best qualities are not always exported by flax-growing countries, but reserved for home use. The Irish Flax Company strongly advocates its own matured seed, and some tested lately showed a maximum germinating power of one hundred per cent., which has never yet been reached in any imported kinds. Besides, the careful saving of seed either for sowing or feeding purposes largely increases the return to the grower.

The field in which flax is to be sown is better to be ploughed in autumn, after a liberal supply of farm manure, and allowed to remain in the furrows all winter, exposed to the pulverising influence of frost. In spring it should be ploughed not too deeply across the furrows, then harrowed and rolled till the soil is fine, as flax must have a firm seed-bed. The best time for sowing is from the middle to the end of April, when all danger of frost is past; and splendid crops have resulted from sowing the first week of May. Not less than two and a half bushels of seed should be sown per acre, and on poor land this quantity may be increased with advantage. The seed should be scattered as regularly as possible, then lightly harrowed and rolled. When the plants are a few inches high, the crop should be carefully weeded by children or women, on hands and knees, and against the wind, as likely to do less damage to the young plants. The operation should be performed when the ground is damp, or a prospect of rain, which gives the plants a better chance of recovering than in very dry weather. When the ground is very clean, and labour for this purpose difficult to procure, weeding may be dispensed with, although it is always beneficial, and has sometimes to be repeated.

When the straw begins to turn yellow, the foliage to droop, and the seeds to change to a pale brown colour, is the proper time to pull the flax. In pulling, the same lengths of straw should be kept as nearly as possible together, and tied in small sheaves five or six inches through. This facilitates the after-process; and if 'rippling' is intended, the bundles do not require to be opened out. The sheaves should now be set up in the field on their root-ends, like corn stooks, to winnow, after which it is ready for the market, if the grower wishes to realise the crop at this stage.

Flax can be thrashed much in the manner of grain, after being well dried, but greater care is required, so as not to break the straw, and thus injure the fibre. Sometimes it is put through

rollers properly adjusted, which pulls off the seed-bolls. More frequently, however, the seed is removed by a process called rippling, and being the most approved method, we shall shortly describe it. The small sheaves are repeatedly pulled with a quick motion through an upright iron comb with round teeth, about one foot high and an inch apart, and with blunt, tapering points. This comb should be firmly fixed to a frame; and on the opposite side to the worker a large box should be placed, or a sheet spread on the ground, to receive the seed-vessels as they fall. The bolls, after being thoroughly dried, can be put through the mill and cleaned.

Experience has shown that the yield of fibre is increased, and the seed also improved, by allowing both to remain in the straw over the winter months, and the rippling delayed till the seed is required for next year's sowing, and the retting until the warm weather has set in.

The next and last operation to be described is that of retting, or rotting off the straw, and is by far the most important and delicate the crop undergoes. On the proper manipulation of the flax at this stage depends to a considerable extent the quality of the fibre. There is no difficulty, however, that may not be overcome with care and attention; and, as has been already noticed, this method of realisation being the most profitable, amply repays the labour expended. The retting process is generally adopted by growers both in Ireland and on the Continent.

Water for retting is better to be exposed to the sun for several weeks before the flax is put in, unless soft or rain water can be had, which is the most suitable. Water containing a large proportion of lime or iron is unsuitable, but any water in which soap will not curdle is soft enough for steeping flax. When slowly-running water is conveniently near, it may be used to advantage. Retting is often performed in the rivers of Belgium and Holland, where the flax is steeped in crates or perforated boxes.

When running water is not obtainable, pits should be dug about forty feet long, eight feet wide, and four feet deep, this being the size capable of containing the average growth of one acre. These pits should be lined with clay and made water-tight.

The flax is then closely packed, root-end downwards, although flax has been retted successfully in any position. A row of sheaves may be placed on the top, laying the bundles flat. On the top, boards weighted with stones should be placed, to keep the sheaves under, and the whole then covered with water to the depth of a few inches above the boards.

At first, the flax will have a tendency to rise as fermentation begins, and stones will have to be added to keep it down; afterwards, the load must be diminished, as the flax will settle down of itself, and this is one of the first signs that the retting process is approaching completion. During the summer months, a week to ten days is sufficient to rot the straw; but as the time varies with the temperature and nature of the water, great care has to be exercised.

A more simple form of retting called grass or dew retting is adopted in some parts of the Continent, and being a safer as well as an easier process for beginners, we give details. Instead of

being put in pits, as described above, the flax is spread out thinly on the grass until the fibre parts readily from the woody stem as given above. As can be understood, this is a more lengthened process, and requires about a month's exposure to sun, rains, and dew before being ready for scutching. This style of retting is often adopted when grass fields are available for the purpose, and is very prevalent in Russia, which has been already referred to as the greatest flax-producing country in the world.

For the benefit of those who do not care to undertake the retting operation, a market, as already stated, now exists for the straw in its natural condition. Although not in a position to give details of the process, we understand the straw is treated mechanically by a machine recently invented for this purpose, details of which will soon be made public. From inquiries among the growers in Fifeshire, we learn that fully three-fourths of the crop during the years referred to was disposed of in this manner in Dundee at prices which left a better result than any other crop on the farm.

THE SQUIRE'S DILEMMA.

CHAPTER III.

NEXT afternoon, Mr Godfrey, in the company of Mr Purvey, was strolling towards the mysterious wooden enclosure. At the outer door Mr Purvey knocked. Within, there was the sound of a machine stealthily and softly grinding and gnawing like a monstrous rat. Mr Purvey repeated his knock more loudly, and the machine, as if alarmed, ceased its gnawing, just as a rat might. Presently there came the sound of a leisurely footstep within; the lock was undone, and two bolts withdrawn, and the door was opened about two inches. Through the opening a man peered, first with one eye, and then—as if to enjoy a variety of view—with the other.

'It's me, John,' said Mr Purvey, with his fullest and richest roll of complacency.

'Oh!' said the laconic John, and opened the door, with a suspicious look fixed upon Mr Purvey's companion.

'I've brought a scientific expert, John,' said Purvey with a familiar smile, 'to see what you're about.'

John locked and bolted the door again behind them.

'No wonder,' said Mr Godfrey, 'that Mr Langland said you were very secret about it!'

'Did he say that to you?' asked Mr Purvey, with a self-gratulatory smile.

'No; to my friend, Colonel Swetenham.'

They entered the shanty, where was another man, of a more responsible and less sulky demeanour than John. For some time Mr Godfrey was engrossed with the things shown and the explanations given by that man, and Mr Purvey was engrossed with Mr Godfrey's attention. Mr Godfrey said little: he looked, listened, and examined. He was especially interested in lumps of dirt, crushed rock, chalk, and what not, that reposed on a long bench. They were shaped like sections of the heart or pith of an enormous cane—some were black as the blocks of charcoal of a common filter—and they bore tickets labelled

'500 feet,' '750 feet,' '1000 feet,' and so on. His examination over, Mr Godfrey turned to leave without saying a word, and Mr Purvey went out with his eyes on the ground, followed by Godfrey.

'Well, what do you think?' asked Mr Purvey at once, when they were again outside the enclosure, returning towards the concrete villa.

'It is not very promising,' said Mr Godfrey, 'so far as it has gone. But I should judge that you have just hit upon the thin end, or tongue, of a measure.'

'Just what I thought myself,' said Mr Purvey.

'And I think,' continued Mr Godfrey—'though I must give a good look round before giving a decided opinion—that the measure lies that way'—indicating the Fairfield Farm—'and not this.'

'That is your opinion,' said Purvey, stopping again and looking on Mr Godfrey with a wistful puckering of his brows—'subject, of course, to revision. I suppose you don't know whose land that is? It is not mine. It is Mr Langland's, or at least his daughter's.'

'That seems a pity, doesn't it?' said Mr Godfrey, and he looked as if he anxiously awaited the elder's reply.

'Well,' said Mr Purvey, fixing his eye on the horizon and balancing his statement with his forefinger, 'it is—and it isn't. I should have liked, of course, if it had proved to be on my side; but I haven't reckoned on it—never do reckon on things of a speculative nature—and I shall be well pleased if it proves to be on Mr Langland's side. It has been, indeed, with a view to the probability of that result that I have made the experiment near the border-line, for I thought it might chance to benefit Mr Langland as much as myself; and if it benefits only him and not myself, I shall not complain. He is a worthy gentleman,' he continued, bringing his eye to bear on the young man; 'but he has not the slightest capacity for business, and therefore he has a very muddled view of the dispensations of Providence. If this should suggest to him that the richest bounties of the Giver of all Good are not on the surface, I shall be glad.'

'You would like him to understand, I suppose,' said the young man, in a kind of thoughtful surprise, 'that Providence is conducted on strictly business principles?'

'Well,' said the old man, with a certain irritation, which he tried to rub from his nose with his ever-active forefinger, 'I don't quite approve of that way of putting it.' He said nothing more, but walked on again with his hands behind him; and after a pause, Mr Godfrey again spoke.

'At anyrate, I understand you will feel no disappointment to speak of if your boring should show, or suggest, that Mr Langland's field is valuable, and not your own?'

'No disappointment at all. Why should I? But—'

He related in a very friendly and confidential way how he held a mortgage on the Fairfield Farm, not with any view of becoming finally possessed of it, but to draw closer such 'friendly connection' as there had always been between the two families—how it was the portion of Miss Langland—how he was interested in Miss Langland—'She is a good, sweet, dear girl, as, I

daresay, you discovered'—and therefore interested in making her and her possessions as valuable as possible: all that he set forth with great fullness, and with a subtle mixture of generous feeling and self-interest.

At first, Mr Godfrey listened with surprise and dislike, but finally with understanding. He had seen more of the business man in all his relations than had the Squire and his daughter, and he had considered him without prejudice; and he now perceived how readily both Miss Langland and her father had misunderstood Mr Purvey, who was, after all, a tolerably simple-minded creature, with a kind of sincere religious feeling and genuine kindly heart, subject, of course, to his ever-dominant commercial instincts and prepossessions. And if, in coming to that conclusion, Mr Godfrey was himself a little prejudiced—well, there it was; Mr Godfrey was himself a kind of business person, and, therefore, who can blame him?

He was so reassured by that conversation that Mr Purvey was not quite the man Mr Langland and his daughter supposed him to be—if such reassurance was necessary to the purpose with which he had come to Sussex—that he developed an enormous amount of energy. He began to make a careful survey of all the ground. He studied a geological map of the district; and he tramped for miles around, over upland and lowland, considering possibilities and likelihoods, and making notes in such strange spots that the casual farmer or labourer who chanced upon him took him for a Government surveyor or Revenue officer reckoning how much more taxing the poor land would bear. These things done, he went to Mr Purvey and set forth his conclusions, which amounted to this—that the Fairfield Farm was a far more likely ground for successful boring than Mr Purvey's own; and Mr Purvey considered him, as if he would have liked to ask if he or Mr Langland had engaged him to survey and take stock of the situation.

'Now,' said Mr Godfrey, 'I would like to ask Mr Langland to let me try a boring experiment on that top field: have you any objection to my asking him?'

'Objection? No!' said Mr Purvey, settling his glasses well on his nose to look at the young man (they were then in 'the library' of the concrete villa). 'Why should I object? But Mr Langland may; firstly, because he has, I think, an absurd, old-fashioned feeling that only the skin of the earth, so to say, is to be used for growing crops, and that the Almighty has not given us any right to pry into its bowels; or, secondly, because'—fitting together the tips of the fingers of both hands with a smile—'Mr Langland, I fancy, cannot afford the expense of a boring operation.'

'I won't ask him to,' answered Mr Godfrey promptly. 'I shall tell him at once that I propose to do it at my own cost—out of mere scientific curiosity.'

'Oh!' said Mr Purvey, closing his hands in a clasp. 'In that case, he may not object at all: I should think he will not object.'

'Then, of course,' said Mr Godfrey, 'I must tell him of your boring, of which he knows nothing yet?'

'Of course, you must,' said Mr Purvey, resett-

ling his glasses, and considering the young man again; 'and you may tell him that I have kept it secret till I knew something certain of the result, for the purpose of giving him a pleasant surprise if the boring suggested any advantage to him.'

'Oh, quite so,' said Mr Godfrey. 'I'll tell him.'

And Mr Godfrey next day went to call on the Squire. He was at home, and received him kindly, though somewhat sadly: his expedition to town had not been so successful as he had hoped it might be.

'I have called on you, Mr Langland,' said Mr Godfrey, when they had exchanged greetings and courtesies, 'for a special purpose.'

'Yes?' said the Squire, seeing in prospect some new disquietude added to his burden of anxiety, and setting himself firmly to receive it.

'I think you know,' continued Mr Godfrey, 'that I came down here on business of Mr Purvey's.'

'Yes,' said the Squire, casting about with alarm if the business could concern him; 'I remember.'

'Mr Purvey, I have found, had set going a boring experiment—boring for coal!'

'Boring for coal?' exclaimed the Squire, staring, and grasping the arms of his chair. 'Coal?—Is he mad?'

'Not quite,' answered Mr Godfrey, smiling. 'There is coal underneath all these downs, you know: there can be no doubt at all about that. The only doubt is, "Will it pay to work it?"—And that was what Mr Purvey, being an energetic and daring man of business, was determined to test.'

'Humph!' grunted the Squire, still vigorously grasping the arms of his chair, as if to make sure he had hold of something solid, if it were only wood.

'He has kept it quiet, Mr Langland,' continued Mr Godfrey.

The Squire interrupted him: 'That people mightn't think him cracked.'

'Not quite that, Mr Langland,' said the other. 'He is the last man, I think, to be afraid of that. He kept it quiet, he has asked me to tell you, that you might have an agreeable surprise if the result of the experiment, when I had examined them, promised well for you—for your land.'

'Agreeable for me!—Promised well for my land!' exclaimed the Squire, transported from one surprise to another. 'And do they?'

'They do,' answered Mr Godfrey, 'promise very well, indeed, for you—and nothing at all for himself.'

'And he has asked you to tell me that?'

'He has asked me to tell you,' answered Mr Godfrey.

'What dodge is he up to now?' asked the Squire, trying hard to look crafty.

'No dodge at all, I think, Mr Langland,' said Mr Godfrey. 'I believe he is quite sincere—in this, at least.'

'Well,' exclaimed the Squire, shifting his chair and resettling himself, with a wondering eye on his visitor, 'you astonish me, Mr Godfrey!—His experiment is really promising for me and not for him, and he asked you to tell me!—But how promising, Mr Godfrey?' he asked with a slight frown of suspicion. 'Promising of what?'

'Promising of great profit,' said Mr Godfrey. 'You know what it would mean to find a coal mine on your estate.'

'Yes,' said the Squire gloomily, 'I know. I have seen the kind of thing: smoke and blackness, rows of ugly cottages for miners, dead trees, and rowdy, drunken men, and the nearest little town made a pandemonium. But yet?'—he pondered.

'With proper management,' said Mr Godfrey, 'most of these results may be prevented; and a goodish mine would be worth to you from five thousand to ten thousand pounds a year.'

'So much as that!' exclaimed the Squire with open eyes. 'But—but,' he stammered, 'how do you set to work to get it?'

'Well, first of all, Mr Langland,' said Mr Godfrey, 'I want you to let me try a boring experiment on that top field of yours close to Mr Purvey's property.'

'But,' murmured the Squire, again downcast when he bethought him that the experiment must cost money, 'will that be expensive?'

'Not very.—But I wish you, Mr Langland,' said the young man hurriedly, 'to let me bear such expense as there may be. I would do as much any day to gratify my scientific curiosity. And,' he added with a smile, 'if we find a mine, I suppose you will let me have the first bid for the lease of the working?'

'Certainly, certainly,' said the Squire, now rubbing his hands in excitement; 'try it by all means.—But I am forgetting. That field is part of my daughter's property: I ought to consult her. Will you permit me to call her in?'

'Certainly, certainly,' said Mr Godfrey, with almost as much expectation as the Squire had inspired the words with.

The Squire withdrew, returning very soon to say that he found his daughter was out.

'I suppose,' said he with a feverish kind of wistfulness, 'that you want to be getting on with that?'

'I do,' answered Mr Godfrey, his mind fixed with regret on the absence of Miss Langland.

'Will you come to dinner to-night?—Yes, that will do. Come to dinner; and then—then we can discuss the matter thoroughly.'

An hour or two later, Kitty Langland returned. She and her sister had gone for a walk—there was little driving or riding in those days of household reduction—and on their return they had met—

'Whom do you think, father? That Mr Godfrey, with Mr Purvey leaning on his arm!—leaning almost affectionately on his arm! He seemed at first inclined to stop, but he didn't. He only raised his hat, and—what do you think?—blushed!—positively blushed! I had no idea that a man who has been all about the world and who has mixed in all sorts of good society could blush!'

'Did he blush, do you think, Kitty,' asked her father with a mischievous twinkle, 'for the company he was in, or because he was overcome with the sudden vision of you, my dear?'

'Don't be silly, father!' said Kitty, but she looked down—to smoothen her gloves.—'But you seem in good spirits, dear,' she observed, raising her eyes again.

'Well, yes, I am,' said her father. 'Mr

Godfrey has been here to tell me a most remarkable thing. I went to find you to assist in the interview, but you weren't to be found.'

'What did he say?' asked Kitty timidly, while a glowing flush rose and suffused all her countenance to her ears.

'Say!' exclaimed her father. 'Mr Godfrey is an extremely clever young man, and I believe he is twisting that Purvey round his finger!'

Then her father told her the whole wonderful business which Mr Godfrey had come to disclose; and as she listened, her wonder and her pleasure grew, and her gratitude to the man who had thus suddenly turned their anxious and gloomy outlook into a halcyon prospect.

'And he is coming to dinner to-night?' she said, rising. 'I am glad you asked him, though I'm afraid we can't give him anything very nice at such short notice.—But, father,' she added, returning after she had taken a step or two away, 'don't you think you ought to have asked Mr Purvey too?'

'Asked Purvey too?' exclaimed the Squire. 'Why?'

'Well,' said Kitty, 'he is, after all, Mr Godfrey's host, and—and our neighbour, and he really seems to have behaved rather nicely in this matter, whether Mr Godfrey has induced him to, or not; and if Mr Godfrey doesn't mind him, why should we? We might send a message over.'

'But won't Purvey,' said the Squire, feeling his beard, 'be in that way encouraged in those pretensions of his—about his son, I mean?'

'His pretensions about his son!' exclaimed Kitty contemptuously. 'We can soon dismiss them—if this business turns out as Mr Godfrey expects!' (Ignorant, unbusiness-like Kitty saw herself in the possession of from five thousand to ten thousand pounds a year a week or two thence!) 'I wouldn't marry his son on any account now!'

She was conscious of the doubtful meaning and emphasis of the 'now,' and she glanced dubiously at her father. But he was intent upon this immediate matter of the invitation to Purvey, who had never yet dined in his house.

'Very well,' said he; 'I'll send a message.' And he went to write it.

STRANGE MESSENGERS AND MODES OF COMMUNICATION.

It is indeed strange to contemplate the different means which man has employed, and the various methods adopted in various countries, to carry news, both in times of peace and in times of war. The first posts are said to have originated in the regular couriers established by Cyrus about 550 B.C., who erected posthouses throughout the kingdom of Persia. Augustus was the first to introduce this institution among the Romans, 31 B.C., and he was imitated by Charlemagne about 800 A.D. Louis XI. was the first sovereign to establish posthouses in France, owing to his eagerness for news, and they were also the first institution of this nature in Europe. This was in 1470, or about two thousand years after they were started in Persia. In England in the reign of Edward IV. (1481) riders on posthorses went stages of the distance of twenty miles from each

other, in order to procure the king the earliest intelligence of the events that passed in the course of the war that had arisen with the Scots. A proclamation was issued by Charles I. in 1631, that 'whereas to this time there hath been no certain intercourse between the kingdoms of England and Scotland, the king now commands his postmaster of England for foreign parts to settle a running post or two between Edinburgh and London, to go thither and come back again in six days.'

From the earliest times fire has been used as a means of communication. *Æschylus*, 500 B.C., describes the communication of intelligence by burning torches as signals; and *Polybius*, the Greek historian, who died about 122 B.C., calls the different instruments for communicating information *pyrra*, because the signals were always made by fire.

A few centuries ago, beacon-fires were used to summon the people in cases of invasion; and in the Highlands of Scotland the fiery cross was sent round as a signal for the clans to rally. The chieftain killed a goat, and having made a light wood-cross, he burnt the ends of it in the fire and extinguished them in the goat's blood. This was called the Fiery Cross. It was given to a speedy and trustworthy courier, who ran at full speed with it to the next village or hamlet, where he gave it to the chief resident, mentioning at the same time the place of rendezvous. It was again sent forward with equal despatch to the next village, and so it passed through the whole district. *Olaus Magnus* mentions a similar method in use among the Scandinavians. The incentive message to Mutiny in India in 1857 was conveyed by means of a *chupattie*, a kind of native unleavened cake.

Cardinal Wolsey, when chaplain to Henry VIII., was sent on a special mission to the Emperor Maximilian, and accomplished the return journey between London and the Netherlands in about two and a half days. This was extremely fast, when we consider the state of the roads and the slow sea-passage between Dover and Calais. Robert Carey, to announce the death of Queen Elizabeth to King James, rode from London to Edinburgh, a distance of about four hundred miles, in three days, resting at night.

In the last century, running footmen were kept by all the county families. Sir Walter Scott relates his having seen them accompanying the state carriage of Lord Hopetoun. The old Duke of Queensberry ('Old Q.') was one of the last to employ them. They wore a light kind of livery, and generally carried a pole or stick about six feet high; in the top of it, which was hollow, they kept a little wine or a hard-boiled egg. They sometimes covered forty or fifty miles a day, and were extremely useful at a period when steam and electricity had not even been dreamt of. Such a messenger is reported to have been sent one evening from Hume Castle to Edinburgh on business for his master the Earl. He was back at Hume Castle the next morning, having accomplished the journey of seventy miles—thirty-five each way—in a single night. Another runner is said to have gone one hundred and fifty miles in forty-two hours, to get some medicine. Even at the beginning of the present

century, news travelled very slowly. In 1811 the news published in the Paris papers had taken the following number of days to reach Paris, the average speed being about seventy miles a day : from Strassburg, Lyons, and Brest, six days ; from Antwerp, seven ; Rome, eleven ; and from Madrid, twenty-one days. To realise what a revolution steam has created in conveying news, it is worthy of note that the mails from Japan were recently conveyed to London within twenty-two days—a little more than the time required eighty years ago to cover the distance between the Spanish and French capitals.

Camels are largely used as carriers in the East ; they have twice the carrying-power of an ox, and with an ordinary load of four hundred pounds, can travel twelve or fourteen days without water, going forty miles a day. The Timbuctu or Mahari breed is remarkable for speed, and is used only for couriers, going eight hundred miles in eight days, with a meal of dates or grain at nightfall.

From the earliest times, signals have been used for communicating information in warfare both on land and on sea. The use of fire as a means of signalling has already been mentioned. Elizabeth had instructions drawn up for the admiral and general of the expedition to Cadiz, to be announced to the fleet when they arrived in a certain latitude ; this is said to have been the first set of signals given to the commanders of the English fleet. James II., while Duke of York, originated a set of navy signals, which were systematised by Kempenfeldt in 1780 ; and a Dictionary was compiled by Sir Home Popham. Mr Chappe then invented the telegraph, first used by the French in 1792, and two were erected in that country in 1816. The naval signals by telegraph enabled four hundred previously concerted sentences to be transmitted from ship to ship by varying the combinations of two revolving crosses. Mirrors for flashing messages from one eminence to another by means of the sun are still in use, and flags are employed both in the army and navy and also in the coastguard service. Semaphores for signalling purposes were invented by Richard Lovell Edgeworth, the father of Maria Edgeworth, in 1767. (See an article on the history of 'Early Telegraphs' in *Chambers's Journal* for August 31, 1889.)

Balloons were used in war at the end of the last century ; they are useful in the case of besieged towns for conveying news beyond the enemy, and also for observing and reporting upon the enemy's movements in a battle. In 1794, the French, during the war against Germany, established an Aërostatic Institute at Meudon, for the purpose of forming a corps of *aëroliers*. During the battle of Fleurus, in the same year, M. Guyton de Morveau and Colonel Garlette ascended twice, and gave important information to General Jourdan. The Austrians tried to destroy the balloon with their big guns, but were unable to get within range. Balloons were used during the battle of Solferino, and also by the Federal army near Washington in July 1861. They were extremely useful during the siege of Paris in the Franco-German war. M. Durnof first managed to convey the mail-bags from Paris to Tours on the 23d of September 1870. Up to the end of February

1871, there were sixty-four balloons sent up, containing ninety-one passengers, three hundred and fifty-four pigeons, and three million letters (weighing nine tons). Postal balloons were also used during the siege of Metz in the same war. On the 8th of October 1870, M. Gambetta made his escape from Paris in a balloon, and alighted safely at Rouen.

Pigeons were frequently used as messengers in the olden times. At the siege of Modena by the Romans, pigeons were used as letter-carriers between Brutus and Hirtius. They were also used during the Crusades ; at the siege of Acre, Saladin corresponded with the inhabitants by this means. At the Olympian games, competitors frequently used this means of informing their friends of their victory. It is a strange coincidence, that in the last Oxford and Cambridge boat-race, carrier-pigeons were used to send the sketches of the race to the *Daily Graphic*. These birds are largely made use of by the daily papers as bearers of news. Carrier-pigeons are extremely useful in sieges to convey letters beyond the enemy's lines. Pigeons were formerly kept at Tyburn to inform the relatives or friends of a criminal of his execution or of his reprieve. Accounts of the speed and endurance of carrier-pigeons would appear almost incredible were they not authenticated. For instance, the American passenger-pigeon can compass the whole Atlantic Ocean, and is able to fly sixteen hundred miles in twenty-four hours. On June 12, 1891, two carrier-pigeons arrived at Fall River, Massachusetts, U.S.A., having flown a distance of two hundred and three miles in two hours twenty-nine minutes—giving an average speed of over eighty-one miles an hour. The Russians are beginning to realise their importance in war, and are training falcons to catch them.

BESSIE.

By E. RENTOUL ESLEK, Author of *The Way of Transgressors*.

'You're failin', Geordie ; your work is not what it was.' Mrs Carr held up to the light an end of the web the weaver had laid on the table. 'It's thin in places, and there are knots,' she said.

'The knots were in the yarn ; I did not make them : it's a good web,' Geordie answered with conviction. He was a little man, with an irregular-featured, dreamy face, and gray hair that curled in small tight knots over his head. He wore a frockcoat of faded brown cloth, and trousers of the same, carefully turned up at the ankles. His appearance suggested an impoverished country schoolmaster rather than a working tradesman.

'I'm sure you do your best,' Mrs Carr conceded generously ; 'but your eyesight is not what it was. I'm not findin' fault ; an' I'll take nothin' off the price ; but it's as well you should know you're beginnin' to go down the hill.'

Geordie did not answer ; there was no good in arguing. His eyesight failing ! Just as if his being stone-blind would have mattered, after five-and-forty years at the loom.

'There's a power of folk send their wool to the big factories,' the farmer's wife continued, Geordie having seemed to acquiesce ; 'but I always

hold by the old neighbours; an' till your work gets still worse, Georgie?—

'It's a good web. I showed it to Bessie, an' she said it was a good web,' the man maintained stoutly.

'It's not to be expected that Bessie would want to hurt your feelin's, an' I respect her for it.—How is Bessie?' Having made her point, Mrs Carr did not wish to be needlessly cruel in driving it home. 'If you'll sit down a minute, I'll put up a bit of butter an' an egg or two for her.'

'Ah'm obliged to you, Mrs Carr.'

'I was very glad to hear the good news of Bessie,' she began, a few minutes later, as she deposited a small covered basket with a slight flourish on the table.

'What good news?'

'Why, about her an' Dan'l Pryce, that she is keepin' company with Dan'l Pryce.'

'Dan'l Pryce drops in of an evenin' now an' then, but there's no keepin' company.'

'Of course not, Georgie.' Mrs Carr burst into a laugh that showed all her white teeth. 'When a young man goes where a young woman is, there's never any keepin' company. It's always the father the young man goes to see, an' to hear about the price o' yarns an' such. To be sure, it is.' Her fat sides shook a little, and the frilled cap border quivered round her rosy face as she spoke.

'There's no keepin' company,' Georgie maintained. His ideas were limited, but they were very definite.

'Well, well; keep your own counsel, my man; folks can't be too careful where a girl's name is in question. It's you Dan'l Pryce goes to see, if you will; an' as he's a steady fellow, an' come of a decent stock, I wish you luck of him.—There; that's the basket; an' here's the money for the web, an' good-day to you.'

Mrs Carr always bewildered Georgie and dazzled such wits as he possessed. She was so fluent and so good-humouredly positive, that the little man lost himself amid her showering sentences.

Georgie Dennet was not a native of Grimpat, but he had settled there nigh on thirty years before, when times were better, work more liberally paid, or his productive power greater. Still, he did not complain; he was able to rub along, and that is as much as most people attain to or expect. He was a widower now, with but one child, the Bessie referred to, a girl of six-and-twenty, with a plain wise face, and a reputation for good sense and clever management that was distinguished even in that practical community.

That Bessie should have a lover had never occurred to Georgie, and that Daniel Pryce stood to her in that relationship was not likely to suggest itself. Daniel was younger than she, his parentage was better, and this advantage has its full value in rustic communities. Then his visits to the weaver's cottage had never seemed specially directed to Bessie—and there was Mrs Pryce!

All the same, when the idea was put before him, it did not seem so utterly unreasonable. The disparity between the young people was not so very great—three years at most, and Bessie

was—Bessie. A sigh rose from the little man's full heart and fell on the bosom of the western breeze. In six-and-twenty years she had never given him a heartache. That another man should see her as she was and desire her was very natural.

Mrs Pryce, Daniel's mother, was highly respected in the parish. As Mrs Carr said, Daniel Pryce came of a good stock, residents in the place for generations, and with an untarnished record on both sides. Mrs Pryce was a widow; that her bereavement dated only two years back was one of the things the neighbours habitually forgot, for James Pryce had, through an accident, been bed-ridden during nearly all their married life. It was worse than if he had died outright, Mrs Pryce said often, when discussing the matter dispassionately, for it added attendance on him to all her other troubles.

James Pryce's bondage lasted two decades, and when he died, he spoke of heaven as green fields among which he would wander, a strong young man again. That Daniel would inherit the farm was a foregone conclusion; he was the eldest, and birthright bulks largely in communities that are somewhat patriarchal. He was a good fellow, entirely free from small vices, but somewhat dull, even in the eyes of neighbours not remarkable for brilliancy. He was moderately tall, moderately good-looking, more than moderately muscular, entirely amiable, a man no way out of the common, or likely to assume heroic proportions in the eyes of a clever girl somewhat older than himself. But the fact was Bessie Dennet was so deeply, silently, unconfessedly in love with Daniel Pryce, that neither she nor I could put it into words.

They had been keeping company three months, but in such a reserved, unobtrusive, brotherly and sisterly way, that even shrewder people than Georgie might have noticed nothing. Daniel would drop in of an evening when Bessie sewed or knitted by the window, or filled the quills with yarn for the loom, the reel gyrating noiselessly under her deft manipulation like a big daddy-longlegs in the middle of the kitchen floor, and the talk would be altogether neighbourly, Georgie taking the chief part often. When Dan was going away, Bessie would sometimes accompany him to the little rustic gate that shut in the house and the flower-patch from the road, and the pair would stand talking there a while, under the moonlight or the stars, while the soft breezes shook the alder bushes, and the landrails called in the standing corn. Occasionally, Dan would execute a small commission for Bessie in the market town when he went with the farm produce, and now and then he would bring her a fairin', a packet of seeds, a story-book in a gay cover, a ribbon for her neck.

The Dennets' cottage was as pretty as a picture. There are people in whose presence flowers seem to thrive. Bessie's garden had once been a piece of waste ground, but now every breath that blew through the open door was laden with a score of delicate odours. Dan could not fancy a greater joy in existence than to sit on the window-sill or lean against the lintel talking to the girl, while the bees revelled in the honeysuckle and the linnets twittered in the elms. He had sown her initials in mignonette in a bed just beneath

the window; and if, when the seedlings first showed above the surface, both he and she saw that B. D. stood for Bessie and Daniel as well as Bessie Dennet, and if they looked into each other's eyes, as the consciousness struck them simultaneously, what did it matter to any one but themselves, and who cared?

This had all lasted about three months, and not a word of love, not a caress had ever passed between them, when, about the same period, Georgie Dennet and Mrs Pryce heard from different sources that their children were keeping company.

Daniel had dressed to go out for the evening. In his attire there was that special something which signifies that a young man's toilet has a purpose in it. He came down-stairs softly, tip-toeing on the carpetless treads. At the foot of the stairs was the seldom used best room. The door stood open, which was unusual, and through it came Mrs Pryce's voice, which was more unusual still: 'I want you, Daniel.'

The young man stopped on the threshold. His mother was at the far end of the room, with her back to the light, her knitting in her hands, the long end of her worsted stocking caught under her arm. The light that lingered in the west after the setting sun fell on poor Daniel's best coat, his well-blackened boots, and the flower in his button-hole.

Mrs Pryce looked at all this splendour derisively. 'Where are you off to?' she asked with a little disdain.

'I was minded to look in for half an hour at Georgie Dennet's.'

'I thought that. Well, this is just what I wanted to say, Daniel Pryce, that I'm against these goings-on. I want no sweetheartin', an' no daughter-in-law; leastways, one as old as myself, an' without a penny in her pocket. If folks mind their business, it's enough for them without larkin' o' evenin's. I'm fair surprised at Georgie Dennet, that he would encourage any widow-woman's son to waste his time an' make a fool of himself; an' you can tell him I said so.'

Daniel stood staring at his mother, the ruddy colour in his face gone a kind of gray with the shock. 'There is nothing against Bessie Dennet,' he stammered helplessly.

'No, nothin' at all, in her own place; but her place is not alongside o' my son. You can tell her to-night that I'm not minded to allow any carryin'-on between you.'

Daniel turned and went out without a word; but it seemed as if the very flower in his coat had shrunk and shrivelled. To him his mother's will had always meant destiny, and it never struck him to dispute it. As he passed down the lane between the hawthorn hedges, it seemed as if there was no more golden light in the western sky, no flower-faces in the grass of the wayside, no bird-voices among the whispering leaves.

Things had been too good to last, and Bessie knew the end had come when she saw Daniel's face; but she talked commonplaces, as women can in these dreadful crises, as much to hold certainty aloof as to deceive onlookers. When he was going away she went with him to the gate as usual.

'What has happened?' she asked.

He did not attempt to evade the question or make light of the trouble. 'Mother thinks I come here too often.'

Bessie understood perfectly. 'And won't she let you come again—never?' she asked a little huskily.

'Oh yes, sometimes.'

'But it will be different?'

'Yes, it will be different.'

Bessie drew a small strangled sigh. If their places had been reversed, she thought she would have rebelled a little; but before she spoke, she had accepted the woman's part of acquiescence. 'Well, we can always be good friends,' she said, with an attempt at cheerfulness.

He put out his hand and wrung hers so that it hurt her, and then he turned away without a word.

It is dangerous to interfere with these slow and silent natures. Daniel obeyed his mother, but it was with that obedience that is a growing revolt. What harm did his visits to Bessie Dennet do any one? His heart hardened against his mother. She was a cold woman, caring for no one's happiness, not even her own, valuing a man, even if he were her own son, no more than an ox, thinking nothing mattered but labour. Well, he would labour, but after that he would please himself. If he could not go to the weaver's, he would go to a worse place. Who could spend all his leisure in a dull, overcrowded kitchen, with men too tired, and a woman too ill-tempered, to speak?

Daniel sulked. He obeyed because he was too proud to do furtively anything so blameless as visiting Bessie Dennet, but he was not the less resentful and wrathful. Instead of going to the weaver's, Daniel went to the public-house, and when his mother forbade this indignantly and shrilly, he only scowled at her.

Daniel Pryce was tipsy. To be the worse for liquor on a fair day or a market day or on the occasion of a merrymaking was in the course of nature; but to be tipsy early in the afternoon and with your work all undone was so disgraceful that none of the Pryces could stand it. The mother had her say; then Reuben spoke about drunken wastrels; and Caleb, the youngest, wondered where folks found the money to get drunk on, since for his part he never could feel the price of a smoke in his pocket. The three brothers were working together unstacking corn to remove it to the barn for threshing. Without answering, Daniel threw down the long fork with which he had been working, and left the field.

Things were too bad to tolerate, and his shame of himself was a large factor in them. He felt in a bad way towards the whole world, as he moved aimlessly along the road, his hands in his pockets, his chin fallen on his breast. It was a remote country road, disused, except by the local farmers, since the making of the highway. Tufts of grass grew here and there amid the paving-stones, and briars flung their long arms across the gaping ditches. Daniel threw himself down on one of these tufts, and soon fell asleep. It was late October weather, and though there was a little tardy sunshine in the air, the earth was damp and cold. Daniel sighed in a strangled way now

and then, as the chill struck to his bones, but he did not awake.

Bessie Dennet was on her way to a neighbouring farm for her daily milk supply when she found the man she loved asleep like a tramp by the wayside. She did not cry, the pain she felt was too acute for that; she only said to herself half aloud: 'They have done him more harm than I should.'

When she spoke to Daniel, he sat up. 'It's you, Bessie,' he said dully.

'Yes. You must not sleep here, Daniel; you might take your death from it, or the fever, like your father. Get up and come home.'

He rose obediently, and went with her. 'We never see each other now,' he said fretfully.

'I don't think that's my fault, Daniel.' Bessie's smile was like tears.

'Has anybody told you that I'm—goin' to the bad?'

'You mustn't go, Daniel,' Bessie said firmly.

'You are too good and fine a man'—here her voice went low—'to let any trouble turn you into a sot for the children to point at.'

He started as though a whip had struck him, and opened his lips as if to speak, but no sound came.

'We don't make our troubles less by beginning to live wrong,' she went on. 'We must try and be brave, no matter what happens.'

'It's about you,' he said huskily.

'Do you think that makes a difference? I don't just see what harm we did you, my father and I; but if your mother thinks we did, maybe she knows best; anyway, you must be a man, Daniel.'

A month later, a nine days' wonder had begun in the parish, for Daniel Pryce had sailed for America. He took the price of his passage and a small outfit as his inheritance, and the farm would be Reuben's. It was chiefly Bessie's doing, her conception of what would be best for the man for whom her love had that protective element without which love is not wholly love. To have new surroundings, new interests, to escape keen eyes and harsh judgments, that would be best for Daniel. But oh, the difference to her, when he was gone! He came to say good-bye to Bessie, but he said nothing but good-bye, with lips that twitched a little; and 'Thank you' for her keepsake.

He wrote two or three letters after he landed, the painful, dumb letters of the illiterate, saying he was well, hoping she was the same, adding that he had got work, and that the country was very large and fine; and then silence dropped like a pall between him and home.

Bessie wrote several times after he had ceased to answer—letters but little more eloquent than his own, and then she ceased to write also.

The dull days succeeded each other at Grimpat, and the seasons came and went, the flowers in the garden budded and bloomed and died, and the simple routine of life went on at the cottage below the hill, but no young step stopped at the gate, no brown face smiled over the half-door. Daniel had been disinherited and transported, just for loving her.

Thoughts like this are fatal when one is not very strong. Bessie came of a weakly race; vitality does not grow robust at the loom. In the

second summer she went about her work less vigorously, lost flesh a little, and had now and then long spells of idleness, her hands lying limp in her lap. For a time she put a good face on things, never complained, pretended not to feel; but by-and-by there was no good in pretending when her whole aspect cried out.

Geordie grew anxious; he had lost two other children just like this, failing, never complaining, dying at the last. If Bessie went too, he did not know what he should do. The neighbours began to condole with him, telling him how good Bessie was, just as if he of all the world had not the best right to know that. When it became almost beyond question that Bessie would die, then every one became very kind, called often to cheer her up, sent little presents, and said only what was best of her. Even Mrs Pryce bestirred herself; she had no grudge against Geordie Dennet or his daughter: on the whole, they had behaved very well, and had said no evil of her, or dropped an unkind word when Daniel went away.

Regarding Daniel, Mrs Pryce was not wholly satisfied. He had been a good son, had never thwarted her except in that one matter of going away. Reuben was different, was more masterful, had a will of his own, was not disposed to ask advice, nor always to take it when given. There were times when the mother recalled Daniel's ways with a new tenderness, and missed him strangely.

Meantime, while the longing for him grew and grew at home, Daniel was forgetting. It is inevitable; change is such an enlargement, and the new life was pleasant. He was only a farm-hand where he had gone—but the work was far lighter than he had often done at home; the splendid machines, which he soon learned to manage skilfully, were a constant delight to him, and the weekly wage a great gratification, he having had so little money of his own in his life. Then there was a pretty and buxom girl in the farm kitchen, who saw no reason why she should not make frank overtures to Daniel: farm-hands did just as well married as single when one could manage the dairy, and the other the harvest; a house was easily run up in a week or two, and people were happier married, it gave a permanency to things. And Daniel heard and pondered—and forgot. But that was before he saw in New England a Star of Bethlehem, the flower he remembered growing abundantly round the old sun-dial in Bessie's garden at home. What memories came back to him in a rush as he saw it—the gray blue sky; the long grass swaying with a liquid motion and a sheen of silk as the breeze rustled it; the scented breath of the clover meadows; the tweet of the sparrows on the eaves; but above all a plain good face full of an unutterable affection for him! He gave a husky cry and covered his face with his hands.

Mrs Pryce had called to see Bessie. She had come once or twice before; this time she brought a few flowers, a bachelor's button or two, a cluster of dwarf roses, a bunch of the crucifer, called rockets in country places, a blade or two of ribbon-grass. Mrs Pryce was growing kind and pitiful because she thought the end was very near. To Bessie her little manifestations were

doubly touching because they were so awkward.

'I just said I'd come to-day whatever happened,' the visitor said, seating herself on the edge of the chair and looking at the girl's thin face sharply. 'The busy season is comin' on now, and I might have difficulty in gettin' away again till 'twas too late, maybe.'

'I'm better,' Bessie said deprecatingly. She was used to these frank references to her own end, and was not conscious that they pained her.

'Yes, that's always the way with decline,' Mrs Pryce answered with the kindest intentions—'one day better, another day worse, another day better, and then, poof! out you go.'

Bessie quivered a little, and the hand that held Mrs Pryce's posy shook.

'It'll be dreadful lonely for your father at his age, you know,' Mrs Pryce went on mournfully. 'Me and Mrs Bridges was just talkin' it all over last night, and we did say that somethin' ought to be done to put him in a right way when he's left. He's up in years, to be sure; but there's many a girl in the country that's that too, an' yet would make him comfortable when you're gone, an' be a good wife to him. He's a bit easy-goin', you know, an' not likely to think of what's best for himself; but if you would speak to him, for his good'—

'I'm not so sure that I won't get better, Mrs Pryce,' poor Bessie said.

'My dear, I'm sure we all hope you will,' Mrs Pryce said, with a hearty intonation of doubt; 'but don't set your mind on it. Life is not a thing to be set on, when the Lord has decreed to take it from us. I'm sure if I had died when I was young I would have been saved many a hard day an' many a sad heart, what with my man ill, an' the farm an' beasts to see after, an' the children to bring up. The Lord knows what a time I've had. An' what does it come to in the end? Look at my sons after all I've slaved for them! Daniel at the world's end, an' Reuben minded to think he knows everything better'n I do.'

'Has there been no new letter from Daniel?' Bessie asked, the little tremor in her voice perceptible to herself, in spite of her efforts.

'No. Maybe I'll never see or hear of him again. Why, Bessie, if he'd married you, an' stayed at home, 'twouldn't have been half as bad.'

She had no intention of being either coarse or cruel; she simply spoke out of her own full heart, as is the rural way, without thought of her companion's point of view.

'But he did not marry me, you see, and he'll never want to, now. You've had your troubles, Mrs Pryce, but I can't say I'm sorry for you,' Bessie said. She had been stung intolerably, and she revolted more suddenly because of her weakness. 'You had a good son, who never gave you a sore heart or a shamed face, till you took shame out of what was no shame. He worked like a horse, that's what he did, from he was able to stand, and all the diversion ever he asked was to look in for an hour at our house when his work was over. An' our company was safe company, Mrs Pryce, whether it was grand or not. He never learned to think worse of good-

ness from us; he would have been no worse son to you in your old age for anything ever we said to him. But you did not care for that; to your mind it was better to drive him to drink an' out of the country, than that we should be friends. Well, you've had your will; we're not friends any longer; but don't ask me to feel for you, for I don't, and I can't.'

Mrs Pryce was not angered, scarcely surprised. She listened to Bessie as to a fractious child, said: 'There, there!' at intervals in a soothing way, sighed heavily when Bessie ended, and said then, in a complaining tone, and more to herself than the girl: 'it's hard to know what to do for the best many a time. One speaks a word in haste, and things follow it that one never thought of.'

Bessie did not answer; she was weak and trembling, but the tears only glittered on her lashes, and did not fall. Whatever came of it, she was glad to have spoken her mind once to this hard old woman.

After a time, Mrs Pryce rose, and with a commonplace or two, took her leave; then Bessie gave way to her emotions, and cried as if her heart would break. What a world it was! It was no great grief to leave it, with its mistakes and cruelties and pain. It was these that mattered, not the living or the dying, which happened to all alike. Bessie was very simple, very inexperienced, very illiterate; but she had grasped a truth that often eludes the wise and learned: that life is meant to be very satisfactory and serene, if only we would not complicate it needlessly for each other and ourselves. In the calm that followed that burst of storm, Bessie saw things clearly, saw that she stood at the grave's edge, and did not care very much whether she went down or backwards—saw the ugly things that spoil life—the tyranny, the pride, the spite; and the fair things, love, loyalty, generosity, truth, that make it worth living—saw that it is not always the bad people that crush others, but just as often the good, in a bad mood. Her heart went out suddenly in a rush of tenderness towards that bygone might-have-been. Now that she knew his mother better, she understood all that she, Bessie, must have been to Daniel. In the harsh, hard-working household into which he had been born, what chance had he of loving anything?

And then she sat up suddenly, and the red flushed in her face like flame. She was experienced enough now to be able to minimise the daily shock of Reuben Pryce's footfall passing the gate, but it always thrilled her to the heart, it sounded so like Daniel's. This time it did not pass; it paused, came slowly up the path among the flowers, and entered at the door.

Bessie rose and stood, a frail figure, against the high chair-back, and Daniel came forward and laid his great hand on her thin shoulder and said, with a terrible cry in his voice: 'What have they done to you, oh my dear, my dear—what have they done to you?'

'Hush! Don't be frightened; I'm better.' She sat down and took his hand between hers and held it. 'I was very ill; but I'll live, now you have come back.'

And she did live, grew strong, and even pretty, the neighbours said.

Mrs Pryce behaved generously. She wanted Daniel at home now, and she made promises and overtures, would have conceded a great deal, or thought she would have done so; but Daniel had travelled, his horizon had widened. Grimpat was not in his eyes what it had been, nor the farm a great inheritance. He wanted Bessie, but he wanted to go away then, parting peaceably with every one. Mrs Pryce gave them a grand wedding; and the young couple left for the vessel that was to take them abroad. Geordie sailed with them; and in one of the few letters he wrote home to tell how prosperous they all were: he said Daniel's garden was half full of the Star of Bethlehem.

IN THE SOUTHERN STATES.

There are but few sections of the civilised world where a man's memory will be carried back to the days of his grandfather as vividly as in the mountainous districts of the Southern States, where, until recently, the distiller of moonshine whisky has carried on his illegal occupation in defiance of the Government, but where to-day the enterprising Yankee capitalists, assisted by their English colleagues, are busily engaged in building towns and factories. Among the many interesting features which will present themselves to the mind of an inquisitive visitor, the most prominent probably are the peculiarities in speech. Here the white and coloured natives 'tote' a burden instead of carrying such; a man is 'powerful' weak instead of very weak; 'right smart chance' of rain falls instead of a severe rain-storm; the baby is quite 'pearl' instead of being in good health and lively; you 'reckon' such will happen instead of expecting or thinking it; you go to a 'burying' instead of a funeral; the miner 'raises' ore instead of mining it, and is called an 'ore-raiser' instead of a miner; the gardener 'grabbles' potatoes instead of digging them; the surveyor uses 'staubs' instead of stakes; the housewife bakes a 'pone' of bread instead of a loaf.

Another feature of interest is the religious sentiment which apparently prevails throughout, especially during that season of the year immediately preceding the gathering or harvesting of the crops. Every settlement, though it may not be provided with a schoolhouse, has its church or meeting-house, where services are held on the Sabbath, and where, during the season I refer to, protracted meetings or revivals are carried on day after day and night after night, as long as the interest manifested by the congregation and the strength of the preacher will warrant. These meetings are regularly attended by every one in the neighbourhood, many travelling to and fro to each service in the ox-wagons used on the farms, into which a merry crowd will seat themselves, including the entire family, with often three generations represented. A stranger meeting the outfit on the road would imagine that a party of picnickers had been encountered, and he would be excusable in such a supposition. For while of course many attend these meetings from purely religious motives, yet many also go because such are the only variety of entertainment known in the neighbourhood. To the young men and maidens an opportunity for

courting is presented on the road to and from the meeting-house; but once arrived there all levity must cease, because it is the custom of the country to separate the sexes, the men occupying one side of the church, the women the opposite side. At such meetings, after singing several hymns and listening to a long sermon or exhortation, in which every argument likely to produce an impression on his congregation is resorted to by the preacher, the opportunity is offered for members to give expression to their feelings, or desire to become identified with the church. Another feature of interest are the 'all-day singings,' held at irregular intervals at the churches, when, by arrangements previously made, a certain Sabbath is set apart for an 'all-day singing.' This will attract a crowd of the younger as well as older residents of not only the immediate neighbourhood but also from distant settlements. After the regular services in the morning are concluded, the entire congregation gather in some grove near by—usually every church has a beautiful grove of shade-trees and spring of pure crystal water in its immediate vicinity—where the baskets of provision brought for the occasion are opened and every one enjoys a regular picnic dinner. After partaking of the refreshments, the people again assemble in the church, and for hours indulge in singing gospel hymns and songs of praise.

Another custom worthy of mention is the care of the neighbourhood graveyards by the inhabitants of the settlement; when, by arrangement, a certain day is set apart for all to assemble at the church, bringing the necessary tools to clean up the graveyard. Baskets of provision are brought on such occasions, and the features of a picnic are added, which rob the manual labour to be performed of much of its appearance of regular work, and make it instead an occasion of pleasant social intercourse as well as an exhibition of reverence for deceased friends.

While in these mountainous sections there is much ignorance because of inadequate educational facilities, yet in no section of country will a visitor find a heartier or more hospitable welcome than at the homes of these people, who so conservatively preserve the social customs and manners of their forefathers.

IN THE DAWNING.

With dimpled hands enfolded on her breast,
And lily lids o'er shading violet eyes
In wondrous sleep, my little baby lies,
Like a wee birdie, in her warm white nest.
Outside, above a hill's dawn-purpled crest,
All radiant gold, the summer sun doth rise,
A glad lark, singing, to the blue heaven flies.
My baby smileth softly in her rest.
Straightway a sunbeam falleth on her face,
As if it were God's answering smile of light,
And lo! two violets are blossoming
All dewily—as violets bloom in spring.
Two lily lids are folded out of sight—
My baby wakes, beneath God's smile of grace.

ALICE FURLONG.

Printed and Published by W. & R. CHAMBERS, Limited,
47 Paternoster Row, LONDON; and EDINBURGH.